



## IMPORTANT KURAVANJI COMPOSITIONS

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## KEYWORDS :

The few important Kuravanji compositions, though all follow the same pattern, including some interesting literary merits also. Of all the Kuravanjis, the Tirukutrala Kuravanji is the work of a poet of note.

**1) Tirukutrala Kuravanji:-**

Tirukuda Eajappa Kavirayar was born at Melakaran, a village near Kutralam in the Tirunelveli District. Apart from this Kuravanji was written in honor of the lord Ilrutodanathar and has to his credit thirteen other literary compositions of merit. The name Tirucuda Rajappa Kavirayar has been given to every successive grandson in that family ever since. The present work was written nearly two hundred and eighty years ago.

The story of the Kuravanji begins with the entry of the Kattaikkaran or the herald who in a song describes in a picturesque manner the procession at Lord Shiva who is Tirukudanathar. The Sakhis who next appear on the scene describe the greatness of the Lord. The Nayika of this Kuravanji is Vasanthavalli. She appears next playing with a ball. Her Sakhis join her in the game. Then passes the grand procession of the Lord whom she watches with fascination and falls in love with the Lord. In a beautiful song, she describes the beauty of the Lord. Smitten with love she suffers and her Sakhis try to console her. At the request of Vasantavalli, one of the Sakhis goes to the lord and brings in return the happy news that she has duly conveyed the love-lorn state of Vasantavalli to the lord. After a while, the Kurathi enters. She describes the beautiful land of her abode, the hills of Kutralam, the magnificent waterfalls, etc. She Nayika requests Kurathi to read her palm and foretell her fortunes. She tells that Vasantavalli has fallen in love with the lord and that her ambitions will soon be realized. Heartened by this prediction Vasantavalli offers valuable presents to the Kurathi who 25 departs signing the praise of the Lord.

It is said that nearly a century ago this Kuravanji was performed at the Kutralam temple, though only at the time of the annual festival but now the tradition stands discontinued. For many years it was also staged during Navaratri festivals at the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore until the abolition of the Devadasi tradition. This Kuravanji was revived in our times by Rukmnidevi in the year 1944 and was choreographed by her for the presentation in form of a dance drama by the Kalakshetra artists. She used to take the role of Vasantavalli in the earlier years till she gave up dancing.

**2. Thyagesar Kuravanji :**

This composition which belongs to the group of sacred prabandhas among the Kuravanji dance-drama has lord Thyagesa the presiding deity of Tiruvarur as its hero. Tiruvarur is one of the sacred places in the Chola country, sung by the Saivite Saints. The heroine of the Kuravanji is named Mohini. In this Kuravanji, in the portrayal of the heroine, she besides addressing the moon, the malayamarutam, and the Manmatha, also addresses the lord directly and laments over his apparent silence and neglect. Another special feature of the Thyagesar Kuravanji is that mythology traces the origin of Kurathi to Narada.

Tumburu unable to find Narada comes to Tiruvarur in search of him as Singan in this Kuravanji. Interesting information relating to Tiruvarur and the story of Manunidhi Chola are vividly narrated, a point which has prompted scholars to include this dance drama in the list of Sthalapuranas of Tiruvarur. The songs of the Kurathi contain stock information about the prosperity of the country of the hero, the fertility of her mountain abode, the countries she visited, and the other places that she is familiar with. In addition to this, astronomical details are also furnished in one of the songs which is a rare feature in Kuravanji compositions. Other common features that we come across in this

Kuravanji are the conversation between the heroine Rajmohini and the Kurathi, during which the latter boastfully describes her professional skill, and waxes eloquent on her extra-ordinary capacity to convert day into night and night into day and to make lotus emerge from fire, gives the names of persons who were benefitted by her forecasts and the rewards she received from them; the Kurathi then requests Rajmohini to make preparations for the worship of Gods, invokes all the deities, reads the palm of the heroine and giving a verbal description of the person to whom she has lost her heart, identifies him as none greater than lord Thyagesa himself and foretells the auspicious day when the Lord will take her into his abode. In the second half of the dance-drama, the Kulavanataka, such details as the Kuravan and his companion being engaged in hunting birds, the Kulavan suddenly thinking about his wife, the Kurathi; going in search of her from place to place and being unable to find her pines for her; the Kulavan, informing the Kuravan that he can find the Kurathi in the hero's abode and finally both the Kuravan and the Kurathi meeting each other and offering obeisance to the Lord, etc. are well rendered. The authorship of Thyagesar Kuravanji is still a matter of research. It is however certain that the author of this Kuravanji lived in the second half of the 17th century A.D. and was the contemporary of Sahaji II (1684- 1710 A.D.) since he refers to the king in the songs.

**3. Agbagar Kuravanji :**

This is a remarkable Kuravanji. Whereas other Kuravanjis are Saivite in theme this Kuravanji is Vaisnavite. Perhaps this is the only Kuravanji that is Vaisnavite. Its author is Kavi Kunjara Bharati (1810-1896 A.D.) Kavi Kunjaram is the title conferred to the poet by Gauri Vallabh. Its author is Kavi Kunjara Bharati (4810-1896 A.D.) Kavi Kunjaram is the title conferred on the poet by Gauri Vallabh Raja of Sivaganga and this title has been perpetuated as his name itself. His original name was Kotiswaraiti, He was the Sansthan vidwan in the courts of, Ramnad and Sivaganga. Kavi Kunjara Bharati is famous for his skanda purana kitranas. He is also the author of Perinpa kirtans. His songs are noted for their beautiful music, sweet diction, and poetic ideas. They exude the fragrance of devotion. The Azhagar Kuravanji was completed in 1840 A.D.

The story centers around Sundararaja Perumal, the presiding deity of Azhagar Kovil in the Madurai district. The nayika is Mohanavalli. The dance drama starts with an invocatory song in Sanskrit in praise of Yaghneswara in Kanada raga. This is followed by the well-known song in Khamas raga 'Swami mayuragiri vadivela' in praise of Subrahmanya. Then there is the song invoking the blessings of the goddess of learning. A picturesque description of Malazhagar surrounded by devotees performing various services follows. The nayika Mohanavalli appears on the scene and like Vasantavalli of Kutrala Kuravanji, engages herself in sports with her maids. She plays the game of the ball. Malazhagar is taken out in procession. The style of this Kuravanji is narrative. Right from the beginning with the entry of the kattiyaakaran (the herald) on the stage, a narration follows how the heroine watching the procession of Malazhagar falls in love with him and is overpowered with the pangs of separation, how she entreats her Sakhi to speak to the lord and convey her love to him. The attendant and the nayika's mother try in vain to soothe her by employing various means and creatures, and comforts to bring her happiness. The Sakhi is delayed on her way while returning from the Lord. Mohanavalli in her love-lorn condition rebukes the moon and the Manmatha. She also addresses the sea and compares her acceptance of the Lord as the sea does. The Lord lies on the serpent bed on the waters of the sea. Later on, the Kurathi appears on the scene who as usual after describing her beautiful abode and boasting about her skills, reads the palm of the nayika and predicts that her desire will soon be fulfilled. She mentions

her skills of doing things impossible on their very face - like twisting the sand into a rope and drawing strands (but of a stone. When she forecasts an auspicious future and happy union, she is given valuable presents, in which the happy union takes place. The marriage of Mohanvalli and Sunderaraja Perumal is also described in a daru. (This is found in an edited version of 1916 by N. Kotiswaran). The play concludes with Mangalam. The Singan-Singi episode is appended at the end. It has fine details relating to birds in the songs sung by Kulavan. This Kuravanji is also said to have been written during the time of Kattamanacciar, who was Zamidarini of Sivaganga in the Madurai district. It is said that this Kuravanji was first performed in front of the Zamindarini and the author was honored with many gifts. It contains many kirtans in exquisite ragas portraying mainly the devotion and sringara rasa.